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to grant them. (The press of all three countries consecrated much space, at the time, to articles proclaiming lasting, unshakeable friendship for the kind and powerful neighbor to the East.) In June 1940, on the pretext that Soviet soldiers stationed in these bases had not been assured proper security, the Red Army crossed the borders of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia, the NKVD moved into power, and all former state machinery ceased to exist.

My account of the Baltic states is not derived from books or manuscripts. The first sunlight I saw, my first smell of the earth, my first tree, were the sunlight, smell, and tree of these regions; for I was born there, of Polish-speaking parents, beside a river that bore a Lithuanian name. I am familiar with the events of the past years not from the dry notes of historians; they are as vivid for me as the faces and eyes of people one knows well.

The invasion of the Spanish must have been an appalling experience for the Aztecs. The customs of the conquerors were incomprehensible; their religious ceremonies, strange; the paths of their thought, impossible to follow. The invasion of the Red Army was no less of a shock for the Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians. Of course, the older people remembered the days of the Tsars; yet this was completely different, and much worse. In the years that had elapsed since the fall of Tsarism, Russia had not evolved closer toward Europe but further away, toward principles of social organization Europe had never before known. The thinking and reactions of these conquerors were just as alien to the conquered as the arcanum of Catholic theology and the Castilian concept of honor had been to the Aztecs.

New general elections were ordered immediately. But these elections had nothing in common with the elections held before then. There was a single list of candidates,

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presented by the new authorities. Why, then, were the cities and countryside covered with propaganda leaflets and handbills; why did megaphones shout day and night; why the trucks decorated with huge portraits of the candidates; why the garlands, the meetings, and the platforms? Why the propaganda if one had no choice? No one could understand. Yet on election day everyone flocked to the polls. They had to vote; for when one turned in one's ballot, one's passport was stamped. The absence of this stamp meant that the owner of the passport was an enemy of the people who had revealed his ill will by refusing to vote. Some people, naïvely, handed in torn or crossed-out ballots; but they were declared valid and affirmative. The final tallies were impressive. The first act of the parliaments thus elected was to make a formal request for incorporation into the Soviet Union. That favor was granted.

One of the new delegates to the Lithuanian parliament was a friend from my early youth. Together we had traveled many kilometers down various European rivers in a canoe, escaped drowning in rapids, wandered over mountain trails, seen the sun rise over the valleys of the Black Forest and the castles of the Rhineland. A few years before the Second World War he became a Stalinist. He was from Warsaw, and his presence in Lithuania at the outbreak of the war was more or less accidental. Nevertheless, he was proposed as a candidate (there were so few Communists in these countries that every one was put to use); and since candidacy was tantamount to election, he became a delegate. It must have been quite an experience of power for him; he could vote the incorporation of a country he had nothing to do with into another country which he knew only from its propaganda literature and official statistics. At the time, that was something new; but other innovations were to come. All over Eastern Europe,